forum DEMOCRATIC left

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ELECTION FIGHTING FUND

DEMOCRATIC LEFT faces two crucial elections in the near future — the by-election in Dublin South Central and local elections in Northern Ireland. Both will cost considerable amounts of money, but successful campaigns will ensure the continued growth of the party over the coming year. The Northern Ireland local elections will be held in May, while the South Central by-election may be called by the government at any time.

The party is launching an ELECTION FIGHTING FUND, to assist fundraising for the elections. A Fundraiser for the Northern Ireland elections is being held in Mother Redcaps, Dublin on Thursday, April 29th — details inside. Please invite your friends to attend — admission is by donation. Other events are planned over May and June and will be notified later. Among them is a sponsored hill walk and a further social in aid of Dublin South Central.

Each constituency and member is asked to make an effort to raise funds for the election campaign, which will be credited to the Election Fighting Fund. Monies should be sent to Democratic Left, 69 Middle Abbey St., Dublin 1. Please do not post cash.

In addition each constituency should plan its own fundraising activities over the coming period.

HELP! HELP! HELP!

TO ASSIST the party's work in the Dáil, Seanad, and European Parliament we need expert back up. It is planned to establish small policy development groups involving members and supporters with expertise and/or interest in specific areas. People involved will receive mailings from the TDs and forward comments and proposals to them in return. It is hoped to put this system into operation immediately

The areas involved, and the people covering them are: Proinsias de Rossa — Arts, Culture, Gaeltacht, Defense, Taoiseach, Social Welfare, Fisheries/Marine, and Foreign Affairs; Pat Rabbitte — Finance, Employment and Enterprise, Tourism and Trade; Eamon Gilmore — Justice, Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications, Education and Sport; Liz McManus — Equality and Law Reform, Agriculture and Food, Health; Joe Sherlock — Seanad Affairs; Des Geraghty — European Affairs.

If you wish to become involved in this essential back up work, please submit your name, and area of interest to Proinsias de Rossa, TD, Leinster House, Dublin 2 immediately.

WAGES NOT DOLE

DEMOCRATIC LEFT'S TDs and MEP staged a protest, above, on April 2nd — European Day of Action on Unemployment — to highlight the need to make employment creation the Number One priority for the government.

Unemployment continues to hover around 300,000 officially, but the protest drew attention to an additional 40,000 people applying for unemployment assistance — on pre-retirement schemes, or systematic short-time or small holders and self-employed — who are excluded from the live register.

The protest was held outside the Central Bank in Dublin, to emphasise the need for political control over the markets.

A leaflet was distributed which called for short-term action such as a Community Jobs Programme to provide 25,000 full-time and 25,000 part-time jobs paying realistic wages and implementation of the banking '3rd Force' proposals; and medium-term proposals including an EC Industrial Policy to divert jobs funding to peripheral areas like Ireland, a new 'carrot and stick' policy to promote re-investment of company profits in Ireland and a shift from tax breaks and grants to low interest loans and equity when assisting new company start-ups.

NO CHANGE IN SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY

The new government has failed to address the policy of welfare cuts and clawbacks, pursued by the previous two administrations and highlighted in the 'dirty dozen' welfare cuts announced by Minister McCreevy last Autumn.

IN pre-Christmas review the Justice Commission of the Conference of Major Religious Superiors said almost one million people were living in poverty. They pointed out that the percentage of national income spent on social welfare declined from 14.7% in 1986 to 13.8% last year. At a more local level a study by the Combat Poverty Agency reported in The Irish Times found that 86% of Limerick Corporation tenants were dependent principally on social welfare, with 32% in receipt of an unemployment payment.

In Fianna Fáil and Labour's Programme for Government poverty got little more than a token mention, and social welfare was dealt with in less than half a page of the 58 page document, receiving virtually the same space as sport.

Social welfare measures on their own cannot end poverty. That requires far greater structural changes in our economy and society and the integration of the tax and social welfare system. The Programme for Government contained a commitment to examine this, but the matter has been taken no further and neither the Budget nor the Social Welfare Bill provides for any moves in this direction.

INADEQUATE

Social welfare measures can, in tandem with tax reform, attempt to lift people above the poverty line. Judged against this objective the Social Welfare Bill, 1993, is a totally inadequate response to the plight of those living in poverty. The Bill introduces some minor reforms, but overall the legislation is a continuation of the pattern of cutbacks and restrictions.

Despite Labour criticism last year regarding delays in implementing the new rates announced in the Budget, the increases are again being withheld until the latest possible dates in July. Child benefit increase will not be paid until September. In the meantime those on social welfare have to endure price increases on items, which have gone up from March 1st as a result of VAT increases. In addition, important benefits like Disability and Unemployment Benefit, Unemployment Allowance and S.W.A. remain below, in real terms, the priority rates set by the Commission on Social Welfare.

Labour candidates campaigned strongly against the cuts during the general election campaign and won many votes from those who had suffered as a result of Mr McCreevy's cuts. When the new administration was criticised for failing to include a commitment to reverse the charges in the Programme for Government, government TDs indicated that the matter would be dealt with in this year's Social Welfare Bill. However, the Bill leaves virtually all of the 'dirty dozen' cuts intact, with only minor changes made in a number of areas.

SECRECY

Another aspect of concern is the secrecy surrounding operation of the supplementary welfare schemes. One of the most damaging cutbacks introduced last year by Minister McCreevy was the restriction placed on the ability of Community Welfare Officers to make discretionary payments for such matters as ESB bills and rent arrears.

This cutback was not made by any decision of the Dáil, by any piece of legislation or by any regulations to which the Dáil could say 'yes' or 'no'. It was done through a secret circular issued by the Minister to Community Welfare Officers. When there was a considerable outcry about the impact of the cutbacks, the Minister told the Dáil in October last that he was issuing a further circular 'clarifying' the original one, although this made no difference to people in urgent need of help with ESB bills or social welfare arrears. Again this was done through a secret circular.

EQUALITY

The Department of Social Welfare is keeping thousands of women in the dark regarding entitlement to substantial arrears of social welfare benefits arising from the equalisation of benefits required under EC Rules.

The government has conceded that married women are entitled to arrears in respect of the period between Dec 84 and Nov 86 because of the failure of the then government to bring female benefits into line with those paid to men.

However the European Court also found, in the case known as Cotter and McDermott II, that married women were entitled to transitional payments made to men when social welfare equalisation was being introduced in the 80s.

It is believed that 2,000 women in Dublin and 800 women in Cork have already received back payments where legal cases have been initiated and that tens of thousands of other women are entitled to similar payments. In some cases arrears paid are reported to have amounted to £6,000 but the Department has made a condition of the payment that women should not disclose the amounts paid.

It seems that once a case is initiated the Department pays up without any further argument, but it is quite unacceptable that women should have to take legal action to receive arrears which the European court said they are entitled to.

GET REGISTERED!

DEMOCRATIC LEFT'S membership is based on the calendar year. So membership for 1993 is now due. It is not necessary to fill out any forms. Simply forward the money to Head Office either directly or through your branch or constituency. The fee is £5 waged and £1 unwaged. Persons with a standing order to Head Office will have their membership automatically renewed.

If you are a supporter and would like to take out membership simply contact any DL member locally or write/phone to Head Office. Cards will be forwarded to all members either through your branch or by post.

COMMENT

THE ISSUE OF JOBS

ONE of the greatest obstacles to overcome in the battle against unemployment is the sense of fatalism and the belief that nothing can be done. The government seems to have thrown in the towel — most media commentators and conservative economists preach a gospel of doom.

There are no quick fixes. But one essential is to challenge the political and economic orthodoxy which leads to a glib acceptance of 300,000 people out of work in Ireland and 50 times that number unemployed in the EC.

The total financial cost of unemployment can be estimated at £3,000 million annually, when social welfare payments, tax and PRSI foregone, additional health costs and reduced purchasing power is taken into account. The financial costs of poverty, crime, vandalism and social alienation add even further to this cost.

In the context our EC membership and how the Irish government deals with its funding structures and policies, two key issues arise:

1. **The failure of the EC to develop a comprehensive European industrial strategy or effective measures to regenerate the European economy — or to commit itself to resource transfers at a worthwhile level — begs the question 'should we not reclaim control of those policy areas which would enable the Irish government to embark on a policy of regenerating the Irish economy? Is such an undertaking possible?**
2. **There is the question of how the £8 billion structural funds are to be used and the role which the National Economic and Social Forum will play in setting the agenda for the Irish economy. It would, for instance, make sense for a specific proportion of the £8 billion — say £1 billion — to be targeted specifically for the food industry. Will we be allowed to do so by the EC?**

JOBS ACTION GROUP

THERE is a need to organise local campaigns on the jobs issue. People interested in helping to organise a practical jobs campaign in their own areas are requested to attend a meeting in Head Office on Monday, April 19th, at 8 p.m. Persons outside the Dublin area who are unable to attend should contact John Gallagher at Head Office, on developing activity in their own areas.

N. IRL. ELECTIONS

DEMOCRATIC LEFT expects to stand around a dozen candidates in the local elections in Northern Ireland, due in mid-May. The party will emphasise the need for a different, positive politics in place of the sectarian divisions which have predominated in much of the work of the outgoing Councils. Among them is Martin McCay, above, who has been wheelchair bound for the past ten years since he was seriously injured in a work accident.

Martin is contesting on the issues of jobs, economic development and cross community co-operation, in Strabane, a town with among the highest unemployment levels in Northern Ireland. "There's far too much petty squabbling and point scoring at the local council level at present. If an industrialist was considering locating here, I am sure he or she would think twice as a result," he says.

Completely paralysed apart from partial movement in his left arm, Martin uses recently acquired computer skills to do most of his political work.

DL is contesting seats in Belfast, as well as Omagh, Dungannon, Downpatrick, Antrim Town and other areas, and is targetting a number of gains. Sitting Councillors, Seamus Lynch in North Belfast and Gerry Cullen in Dungannon are hoping to retain their seats.

N. Irl. Elections Fundraising Social

Mother Redcaps Tavern
(opposite Christchurch Cathedral, Dublin)

Thursday, April 29th, from 8 p.m.

Live Music • Spots

Admission by Donation — All welcome!

Members' View

A NEW APPROACH TO ADVICE CENTRES

Helen Lahert, DL candidate in Dublin North Central, argues that the party must re-examine how best to keep in contact with people's concerns.

FOR a candidate of any political party, being available to constituents is vitally important. However, sitting in pubs and community centres two or three mornings a week and waiting for people to arrive with their problems may not be the most effective method.

Using these hours to knock on doors seems to me to offer a lot more potential for meeting constituents, many of whom would never queue to meet any public representative.

In Dublin North Central we have started calling to doors in a number of areas. Issues arise or are earmarked by us, they can vary considerably from a petition for the provision of traffic lights at a dangerous junction to campaigning for support for the building of a women's refuge in the face of strong local objections. This form of contact gives us a chance to show the type of things we stand for in a very practical way.

A day out talking to people at doors also unearths other problems and positive moves in the community, some of which we will be asked to take up or help out with. We have also found that word of our presence in the area spreads and linked with the issue we've taken up is discussed at local tenants groups and ladies' club meetings. Contact made is reinforced by distributing our newsletter in these areas.

In DL we must be imaginative in our constituencies in terms of how we operate. The way something "has always been done" is not necessarily the best way.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Waterford City Councillor, Paddy Gallagher, proposes 'constituency twinning' as a means of keeping party members in contact with other areas, both politically and socially.

HERE in Waterford we have set up a series of football matches — 'friendlies' I hope! — involving party members in the city, Tramore and Dungarvan. We are also planning games with workers in different companies.

The proposal arose because we feel there is a need to improve contact between members in different areas. Hopefully social meetings such as the above will involve the inevitable discussion on politics as well as an exchange of ideas and opinions on party policy and campaigns.

It would be a good idea, I think to expand this type of contact between constituencies, so that weaker and stronger, and urban and rural sections of the party could improve contacts. Here in Waterford we would like to hear from any constituency that is interested in this type of 'twinning' arrangement. And other constituencies might do likewise.

• Paddy Gallagher can be contacted at 051-77090 (h).

NEW THINKING ON JOB CREATION

Joe Holohan, from Malahide in Dublin North, believes it's time to shake out some answers from the job creation debate.

HAVING worked over 20 years in the area of job creation — as a product development manager in the semi-state sector and setting up my own businesses I believe jobs with decent incomes can be created by ordinary people (given a different support structure than currently exists). A socialist government could create jobs by addressing the communities needs from a socialist perspective.

One immediate objective should be to set up Job Unions (like credit unions) on a local basis to involve local people in dialogue about jobs, leading on to local initiatives in job creation and political awareness of how the system needs to be changed to empower them longterm.

Outline a path they can follow from ideas to dialogue to feasibility to start-up to establishment to survival and the support we will organise for them short-term and long-term.

It's really a very easily understood process which is cloaked in the false mystique of the cult of the entrepreneur.

Job creation is about ideas and skills (which exist in abundance), organisation, finance, modest expectations, co-operation, confidence to try and great determination to succeed.

Let's put our DL representatives at the forefront of these initiatives locally and position ourselves to respond politically to their needs as they evolve and we become more aware of them.

Communicate the job creation possibilities we see in co-operatives, the EC, local government, greater support for the many such initiatives that already exist etc.

Socialists seem able to propose all sorts of practical solutions for every social evil except unemployment. It's like as if we see it as apart from us in some way. We criticise but don't feel confident to take the problem by the scruff of the neck and shake out solutions.

Be very sceptical of the experts, very aware of the vested interests, put our belief in ordinary people's ideas and be prepared to weigh in behind them with our not inconsiderable political muscle.

Start with Eric's campaign, position Des Geraghty at the forefront of the European dimension and make 1993/94 the year we put up or shut up about THE JOBS CRISES!

PEACE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Public Meeting

Wednesday, April 14th, 7.30 p.m.

Ernest Walton Theatre, Arts Block, TCD

Speakers:
Des Geraghty MEP; Mark Durcan, SDLP;
Jim Walker, DUP.

Organised by TCD student branch.

NEW CAMPAIGNS FOR WOMEN'S REFUGES

WITH increasing awareness of the level of domestic violence against women, efforts are being made to establish new refuge centres in both Dublin North Central and Dun Laoghaire.

• In **Dublin North Central,** proposals have been made to use part of the waste land around Woodville house for a much needed facility. Aoibhneas women's refuge has applied to build a single storey building with 10 individual family units. They presented their plans to local residents in January.

Democratic Left representative in the area, Helen Lahert, actively supports the campaign to establish a centre locally. There has been some opposition, including a misleading petition circulated against the centre. "This is a vital facility which should be provided in the community to assist women who experience often very serious violence," Helen explains.

• **In Dun Laoghaire** a similar lack of facilities has led to a new effort to set up a facility in an area with a 100,000 population. Outgoing women's officer of Democratic Left, Francis Kelly and incoming officer, Deirdre Lally, are among those involved in the campaign to get a centre established. Those who wish to support in any way should contact Deirdre at 2826787.

"WOMEN tend to endure physical, mental or sexual mistreatment and violence from their spouses for between five and 15 years before finally seeking a way out," Roisin McDermott of Women's Aid explained at a recent meeting on 'Women and the Law' organised by DL's Women's Committee.

"Such women need a place where they can feel secure, where they can stay with their children and where they can receive advice and support from other women, who are either working in the refuge or breaking away from a violent relationship," she pointed out.

While there are a number of temporary shelters available to women, the availability of refuge centres is still extremely limited. One of the longest established is the Rathmines refuge. Figures for the year up to November 1992 show a total of 559 women sought refuge there. The Centre could only accommodate 149 women over the same period.

A national Helpline has also been established and received 3,010 calls in the same period. It can be contacted at 8723756. Persons interested in supporting or initiating work on women's refuges in their area may contact 8723122.

"The Clinton Presidency — A new era for women?"

Wednesday, April 21st, 8 p.m.

Speaker: Dr Helena Carlson,
(Professor of Psychology,
Lewis & Clarke College, Oregon)

in Head Office, 69 Middle Abbey St.
Dublin 1

Organised by the Women's Committee

ALIVE AND KICKING

OVER 200 people turned out for the party's '1st Birthday' celebrations in Dublin on March 27th. One of the biggest cheers of the evening was for Eric Byrne's cutting of the birthday cake, (above).

The event also marked the official celebration party for Joe Sherlock's election to the Seanad. In honour of the historic success, Party Secretary, Des Geraghty, MEP, presented Joe with an engraved crystal (below).

EURO MEETING

DEMOCRATIC LEFT is hosting a meeting in Dublin in mid-May of a number of parties from the New European Left Forum, including parties from Denmark, Holland, Spain and Finland. It is hoped to hold an information and discussion meeting on Sunday morning, May 16th. Persons interested in attending should contact John Gallagher in Head Office closer to the date for details.

STRASBOURG HOLIDAY — NET PRICE JUST £275!

AS we have negotiated a cheaper flight route for the July holiday to Europe, the cost is being reduced by £20 on the price advertised in the last issue of 'Forum'. The net cost will now be £275.

The holiday, which runs over six days from Tuesday, July 13th to Sunday, July 18th, involves two nights in the historic German city of Heidelberg, a further two nights in Strasburg, including an information visit to the European Parliament and dinner with Des Geraghty, MEP, a night in Koln with sightseeing and a night in Brussels before returning home.

The gross cost of the holiday is £505. The cost is reduced, however, by a refund of £230 from the European Parliament, based on registration at the Parliament on July 15th. This will be refunded within two weeks of registration. Costs cover travel, accommodation with continental breakfast, health and travel insurance, government taxes, and luxury coaches between destinations.

Deposits of £50 to secure the holiday should be made payable to Des Geraghty, MEP, and sent to 69 Middle Abbey St., Dublin 1. As a number of deposits have already been received, early booking is advisable. Enquiries to John Gallagher at 01-729700.

RÉABHLÓID NA mBAN IN ÉAG?

Tá gach cosúlacht ar an scéal ó thaobh nuachtáin, irisí, agallaimh agus eile go bhfuil athcheistniú á dhéanamh faoi láthair ar Ghluaiseacht chun Saoirse na mBan. Is léir dearcadh agus tuairimí á nochtadh anois nach raibh le cloisteáil ach go hannamh go dtí seo. Ceist a chloistear níos minicí anois ná "An bhfuil gá leis an ngluaiseacht amach anseo?" Deir lucht curtha na gceist úd nach bhfuilid ag fáil lochta ar bhunú na gluaiseachta ná fiú nach raibh dianghá leis nuair a bunaíodh é. Ní hea chor ar bith, adeir siad, ach go bhfuil cothromaíocht bainte amach anois agus go mbeadh sé 'míchothrom' bheith ag díriú ar ionannas na mban amháin a thuilleadh.

Ba chóir bheith ag súil, gan amhras, le hathbhreithniú ar réabhlóid ar bith. Ghlacfaí leis gur maith an rud é súil siar a chaitheamh ar ghluaiseacht d'aon saghas agus stair na gluaiseachta a iniúchadh agus a scagadh le buntáiste an tsúil siar chéanna. Ach an trí thimpist atá an cíoradh seo ar siúl ar ghluaiseacht na mban anois? An bhfuil lucht curtha na gceist macánta? An amhlaidh gur fíor go bhfuil cothromaíocht céime sroichte idir fhir is mhná? Ní fhéadfadh ach dallamullóg a bheith ar éinne a cheapfadh a leithéid. Ní léir domsa go bhfuil saoirse na sráide ag mná gan eagla. Is léir dom go dtarlaíonn banéigean chuile lá sa tseachtain, ag baile agus lasmuigh de. Ní léir dom laghdú ar líon na mban a bhataráltar. Is léir dom tithe cosanta dóibh lán go doras. Ní léir dom ísliú ar líon na gcailíní óga a ndéantar cur isteach collaí orthu. Is léir dom nach bhfuil na seirbhísí sóisialta réidh le cabhair a thabhairt dóibh. Ní léir cumhacht ag mná in ionaid oibre ná iad ar chomchéim tuarastail ach oiread. Ní saoirse ná ionannas go cumhacht

F. Mac Aogáin

ECONOMIC CONFERENCE

* The party's Economic Affairs Committee recently organised a meeting in Dublin on job creation. Special guest speaker was British economist, Robin Murray. Photographed at the morning session were: Triona Dooney, chairperson, Robin Murray, Des Geraghty, MEP, Paul Sweeney, chairperson Economic Affairs Committee, Proinsias de Rossa, TD and Rosheen Callender, Economic Affairs Comm.

AER LINGUS RAISED

Democratic Left raised the issue Aer Lingus — opposing privatisation and supporting provision of adequate funding to maintain the company as a viable national airline — in its first allocation of private members' time in the Dáil just before Easter.

The party argued the need for a quick response from the government to the company's requests for funding, which is causing additional difficulties for the airline

The party is allowed a limited amount of Private Members' Time, this being the first since the last general election. The full test of the party's motion read: That Dáil Eireann

— recognising the strategic importance of Aer Lingus for the Irish economy, its role as a provider of substantial employment and the necessity for a viable national airline,

— concerned at the implications of the recent senior appointments and resignations in the company and at the government's continued failure to announce a coherent air transport polilcy and to provide Aer Lingus with the equity capital which it needs,

calls on the government to
1) immediately publish its air transport policy,
2) provide Aer Lingus with adequate equity capital to enable it to develop as a viable national airline, and to state without further delay the amount and form of the equity, and
3) reject the privatisation of any part of Aer Lingus

ENVIRONMENT

THERE will be a meeting of the Environment Committee in Head Office on Tuesday, May 11th, at 8 p.m. Any members or supporters interested in joining the Committee's work are invited to attend. Enquiries to Kay Lynch c/o head office or tel. 01-315888.

TIME FOR HONEST ANALYSIS

The following is an edited version of the speech of Proinsias De Rossa, TD, in the Dáil Debate on Northern Ireland, April 1993.

OUR responsibility is to the future, not the past, and if we must betray the past, so what? Padraig Pearse said that 'Ireland unfree shall never be at peace'. That is the nonsense the Provos use to justify the murder of Jonathon Ball and Tim Parry. As far as I am concerned the Irish people will never be free until we have peace. We will never have peace until we accept the reality that the political border represents a real divide between the people of this island. That divide can only be bridged by tolerant pluralist democratic politics. Seeking to bridge it by force has deepened that divide and will ultimately destroy us if it does not end soon.

We must not lose sight of the fact that the Provisional IRA has been the main perpetrator of violence in Northern Ireland during the past 22 years. Men, women and children have been murdered and maimed allegedly in the name of a united Ireland, but in reality the murder campaign has been directed at terrorising the Protestant population into acquiesence to enforced unity. If they don't like it, they can leave: Brits Out Prods Out. 'Tiocfhaidh ar lá' is the warcry of revenge.

TERROR

Nationalist terror is now being matched by loyalist terror. The UFF is every bit as ruthless as the IRA and has perfected its capacity to murder to the same degree. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery and the 'terrible beauty' of the IRA now has a loyalist twin.

It has taken a particularly brutal and shocking outrage to once more stir us out of our collective lethargy. The particularly cruel circumstances of the Warrington bombing stunned people and I hope that it will prove to be another watershed in our attitude to the Provo campaign in a way that Darkley and Enniskillen were.

The placing of a bomb in a litter bin in a crowded shopping centre — one outside a McDonalds restaurant — meant that children were intended to be murdered. Any human being with a spark of humanity could not but be appalled by the spectacle of young children fleeing in terror from one bomb, only to run directly into the shrapnel of another. And then we had the sickening pretence that they never intended to injure anyone.

Some people, especially in Northern Ireland, ask why the Warrington bombing and similar incidents such as Enniskillen have created outrage down here in the Republic when equally vicious atrocities carried out by loyalist gangs do not seem to provoke the same reaction. I believe that the vast majority of people in this state are appalled by all murders, irrespective of the perpetrators or their victims. But what adds to the outrage about Warrington and Enniskillen is that those who placed the bombs claim to do it on our behalf. This, coupled with the anger at the death of two children brought 20,000 people on to the streets of Dublin.

PEACE INITIATIVES

There are those who say we have seen such demonstrations before and they achieved little. They point particularly to the Peace People during the 1970s. This understates the achievements of the Peace People and underestimates many other peace groups which continue to operate. They did not stop the violence completely but they certainly helped to secure the reduction in violence seen in the late 1970s and to narrow the base of Provo and loyalist support. Indeed the Provisionals were in serious trouble during the late 1970s. It was the emotional response to the pointless deaths in the H Block hunger strikes coupled with the intransigence of Mrs Thatcher which helped breath life back into their campaign.

Peace Groups and public demonstrations are important but on their own cannot end the violence. There is a need for political action on the part of democratic politicians to match the mass action of people. There must be no queston of stepping back and hoping that Susan McHugh and colleagues can stop the violence. We must give the political leadership so that public revulsion is given a positive direction to ensure that paramilitary groups are made irrelevant, isolated and ultimately destroyed as part of the political equation.

It is not enough simply to demand that the Unionists in the North should change, we must be prepared to abandon the political shibboleths of constitutional nationalism. We have to scrupulously examine everything we say and do to ensure that it lends no encouragement to any murder gang.

PERMANENT PEACE

If a permanent peace is to be found politicians generally will have to be prepared to demonstrate a new flexibility and willingness to compromise. The people of Northern Ireland have not been well served by their politicians who show an unwillingness to compromise and whose ritual response seems always to be — as was the case with John Hume's recent statement — to 'blame the other side'.

John Hume, Leader of the SDLP, member of the Westminster and European Parliaments, has urged the British and Irish governments to go over the heads of the politicians in Northern Ireland, with an unspecified 'solution'. I have already publicly urged rejection of such a foolhardy enterprise and welcome its rejection by both the Irish and British governments.

Rejecting it the Irish government defined the priority of both administrations as being 'to get all of the constitutional parties back around the table to resume political dialogue'. The Northern Secretary of State has taken a broadly similar line — that the politicians should listen to the electorate and get them back to the talks process.

HONEST ANALYSIS

In welcoming their stance I have to say that the positions of both governments are crucially deficient. Unless we honestly analyse why the talks process halted and accurately assign responsibility, then it is pointless to make generalised pleas for the parties to get back to the conference table.

As Garret Fitzgerald noted in the 'Irish Times', Jan 1993, the talks had seen "a visible growth of mutual trust among the Northern participants.... All were at one in remarking on the considerable progress made in the working groups, where bits and pieces of tentative agreements on various issues seemed to be beginning to emerge". One key factor which allowed progress was the undoubted capacity to negotiate seriously and to make significant concessions made by Unionists, especially the Ulster Unionist Party. Despite this John Hume has recently attempted to suggest that the Unionists are unreconstructed champions of Protestant supremacy.

ARTICLES 2 and 3

The failure of the Irish government to state that it **would** — as distinct from **could** — put a referendum on Articles 2 and 3 was a major cause of the collapse of the talks. The signs of flexibility on Art. 2 and 3 shown in Deputy Quinn's 'Fortnight' interview and in the Tanaiste's Mansion House address is welcome. However, there are still too many signs of unreconstructed traditionalism on this issue in the governing parties. We should not listen to those who suggest an amendment would leave the Catholic population of the North 'deserted', and the sloppy thinking that every Catholic is a nationalist thirsting for unification. The consistent findings of the Annual Social Studies Attitudes Surveys is that around half of Catholics in Northern Ireland would not describe themselves as nationalists.

The Anglo Irish Agreement represented a belief on the part of the then British government that as power sharing-devolution was unlikely to be attained, the only way Catholic interests could be represented within the Northern Ireland state was to give a new consultative role to the Dublin government. This approach created more problems than it solved. Nevertheless one beneficial consequence is that the existence of the Agreement is the fundamental guarantee that the minority in Northern Ireland cannot be deserted by the government of this state.

NEGOTIATION

It is here that we must deal clearly with the SDLP. Despite constant lecturing of the Unionists about politics being about negotiation, they show no inclination to move from an opening position which was effectively for a form of joint authority shared between Britain and Ireland. This 'solution' shows that constitutional nationalists, whatever their rhetoric, have decisively left behind the Ireland for which the 1937 constitution was thought appropriate. Joint Authority is not compatible with Art. 2 and 3.

If we say we are open to change in the context of what the Tanaiste called 'a generally acceptable package' and mean the kind of settlement envisaged by the Leader of the SDLP, we will get nowhere. We must acknowledge that the talks saw important signs of flexibility on the part of the negotiators of the UUP. Given the current Protestant 'angst' about a possible British desire to disengage, articulated forcibly by the leader of the Alliance Party, this flexibility was unprecedented and brave.

However, constitutional nationalism has virtually turned its back on this development, where it has not actively denied, disparaged and misrepresented it. We must do our utmost to support those in Northern Ireland from both 'traditions' arguing for the politics of realistic political compromise. Just as Unionists will not be bombed into a united Ireland, they will not be blathered into one either!

NEW GROUND

If the parties in government are to break new ground they must not allow themselves be held back by those incapable of broader vision. Some politicians here have been unwilling or incapable of change. Unionists in Northern Ireland are in the view of some, trespassers on this island who, in the words of Deputy Michael Bell in July 1991, should return to Britain "where they belong". Others, like Fianna Fáil Deputy, Michael Noonan, are simply the nationalist mirror image of unionists Dr Ian Paisely in Northern Ireland.

It is shocking to find another Labour Party Deputy prepared to speak the language of the Provos, in a speech recently by Deputy Declan Bree to an organisation known as 'the Irish National Congress", entirely consistent with speechs each year to the Provo Ard Fheis by Mr Gerry Adams.

One would have thought that the ending of death and destruction in Northern Ireland would be high on everyone's priorities, but nowhere in Deputy Bree's reported comments was there condemnation of the activities of the para-militaries or any sympathy expressed for their victims.

I see no sign of willingness by the Provos to acknowledge either the immorality of their actions or the futility of their campaign. The latest statement from Mr Gerry Adams in which he called for a "new beginning to build peace" is notable only for cynicism. The Provos have adapted their former strategy of the ballot box and the armalite and now seek to go forward with a peace plan in one hand and a pound of semtex in the other.

Anyone tempted to give credence to Adams' current talk of peace should bear in mind his words following the IRA murder of two building workers in 1988. "There is a war going on and they took sides." The community in Northern Ireland is psychologically forced to think of itself as belonging to one or other of these camps. Yet the reality is that the vast majority want no truck with that depiction of politics.